

uninsured. Although the Affordable Care Act and President Biden's expansion of the Affordable Care Act have helped many receive healthcare coverage, people of color remain less likely to have healthcare coverage.

It is our duty in Congress to ensure that our Hispanic and Latino communities have the resources and access to healthcare they need so we can close the gap between them and their White counterparts. This comes with educating these communities on how to sign up and receive healthcare. It also comes with comprehensive immigration reform to provide an easier pathway to citizenship so people can come out of the shadows.

Regardless of the repercussions of the pandemic, Hispanic and Latino Americans remain optimistic, filled with love and pride for their families, communities, and the United States of America. I want to take this opportunity to thank Hispanic and Latino Americans for their contributions that have made the United States the country it is today. I want to thank the hard-working Hispanic and Latino essential workers who have put their lives at risk to keep our country running during the pandemic. I want to thank the Hispanic and Latino communities who love our Nation and strive to change it for the better. Thank you for being an important part of the American story.

REMEMBERING AMBASSADOR GEORGE S. VEST, III

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I would like to bring to the attention of colleagues the recent passing of longtime U.S. diplomat George Southall Vest, III, a long-time resident of Bethesda, MD. He was 102 years old. His career with the State Department spanned the Cold War era, from 1947 to 1989. As chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, I want to draw particular attention to Ambassador Vest's representation of the United States at the initial multilateral discussions of 35 countries that led to an historic summit in Helsinki, Finland, from July 30 to August 1, 1975, where the Helsinki Final Act was signed.

An all-European summit was not a priority for the United States in the early 1970s. Indeed, it was a long-standing Soviet proposal, and Washington was wary of its use to confirm the division of Europe, give added legitimacy to communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and provide an opportunity for Moscow to divide the United States from its European allies. Washington agreed to engage but saw little value in the effort. As Ambassador Vest himself was quoted as saying, "This was the first time after World War II where all the Eastern European countries, all the Western European countries, together with Canada and the United States, sat down to talk about security and cooperation . . . I had very, very few instructions. I was left pretty much to feel my own way."

The early work of Ambassador Vest and his team and that of his immediate successors led to the Helsinki Final Act, which included 10 principles guiding relations between states that serve as a basis, to this day, of our response to events in Europe, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine and other neighbors. The Final Act provided a comprehensive definition of security that includes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the basis for us to address today's brutal crack-down on dissent in Belarus and authoritarianism elsewhere. It also provided for a follow-up to the Final Act with regular reviews of implementation and development of new norms, a multilateral effort now represented by today's 57-country Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with its important institutions and field missions.

Ambassador Vest, left pretty much to feel his own way, may not have intended to make such an impact on European security. Keep in mind that he represented the United States in these negotiations during the tumultuous time of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, an oil crisis on the horizon, the growing Watergate scandal at home, and a rising Soviet threat across the globe. Nevertheless, his initial efforts contributed to an end of the Cold War division of Europe rather than a confirmation of it. That is quite a turnaround. I should add that the Congress later played a major role in shaping the U.S. contribution to this result when it created the Helsinki Commission in 1976. While things have changed since then, the Commission does now what it did in the late 1970s: ensure that human rights considerations are central to U.S. foreign policy and U.S. relations with other countries.

Given the challenges we face today, I hope it is useful to remind my colleagues of Ambassador Vest's legacy as a diplomat. Both before and after the negotiations, he served in positions in which he worked to strengthen ties with Europe, including through the NATO alliance and dialogue with a growing European Union. He was also a mentor to new generations of American diplomats. All of this followed his combat service as a forward artillery observer in Europe during World War II.

George Vest joined the Foreign Service in 1947, after using the G.I. Bill to earn his master's degree in history from the University of Virginia, where he had received his B.A. in 1941. He served as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs under President Carter and as U.S. Ambassador to the European Union from 1981 to 1985. His last assignment at the State Department was as Director General of the Foreign Service. He retired in 1989 as a "career ambassador," a rank requiring a Presidential nomination and Senate confirmation.

George Vest's father was an Episcopal priest and Vest graduated from

the Episcopal High School in Alexandria, VA, before attending U-Va. He was as dedicated to his church as he was to our Nation. He served on the vestry at St. Albans Episcopal Church and volunteered in its Opportunity (thrift) Shop, both located on the Close of Washington National Cathedral. He also tutored students in DC public schools. Two sons, George S. Vest, IV of Fairfax, VA, and Henry Vest of Broomfield, CO, and two granddaughters survive him. I send my condolences to his family and thank them for his life of service. Let us be inspired by Ambassador George Vest and plant our own seeds for a better world tomorrow.

RECOGNIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF MAINE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

Mr. KING. Madam President, I rise today in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Department of Maine, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Maine VFW. Maine VFW was founded in 1921 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving U.S. veterans of overseas conflicts, advocating for all veterans, their families, and their communities, and recognizing the sacrifices America's servicemen and women have made for this great country. Maine VFW, alongside its sister chapters across the United States, represents the oldest war veterans' organization in America. Every year for the last century, it has made a positive and tangible impact for Maine veterans. Maine VFW deserves not only our admiration, but also our gratitude.

Since its founding, Maine VFW has secured an array of remarkable victories for its membership and the many communities it serves. Through the Veterans Affairs office at Togus, Maine VFW helps recoup more than \$5 million in earned benefits every year. Maine VFW also advocates for veterans and their families at the State and National level and has helped shape national security and veterans' policy for generations of Americans. In 2020, for example, Maine VFW helped expand the VA's list of conditions for which there is a presumptive service connection for veterans exposed to Agent Orange and has made important strides to support veterans exposed to toxic chemicals in the first Gulf War and the Global War on Terror. Additionally, Maine VFW has worked tirelessly to improve mental healthcare for American veterans and successfully advocated for the John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, landmark legislation to increase the VA's mental health workforce and strengthen rural veterans' access to care, which was signed into law last year. Pursuant to its commitment to patriotic service, stewardship, and education, Maine VFW also spearheads a variety of community advocacy initiatives, food and blood drives, and Homeless Veterans Stand Downs to respond

to the needs of Maine's most vulnerable populations.

On the national level, Veterans of Foreign Wars and each of its State chapters have played a central role in the passage of nearly every important piece of veterans' legislation over the last 100 years, including the GI bills that have helped millions of veterans pursue education and training opportunities since 1944. VFW champions several major youth education and scholarship programs, such as Voice of Democracy, a competitive audio-essay scholarship that awards nearly \$2 million annually to students in grades 9–12. VFW and Auxiliary members participate in thousands of community service initiatives and major philanthropic campaigns each year. VFW also performs important work abroad, advocating for prisoners of war and servicemembers who remain missing in action.

Throughout our Nation's history, America's veterans have put themselves in harm's way overseas so that we may enjoy freedom at home. A testament to Maine's dedication to this cause is the number of veterans per capita in our State, which consistently ranks as one of the highest in the Nation. Day in and day out, the Maine VFW works to support these veterans and their communities and has done so for a century. On behalf of a grateful nation, I would like to honor and thank the Maine VFW for these 100 years of service. Its steadfast support for servicemembers, veterans, and their families continues to change the lives of Americans at home and abroad.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING BRIGADIER GENERAL CHARLES E. FLEMING

• Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to the remarkable life of Retired BG Charles E. Fleming, a 35-year veteran of the Illinois Army National Guard who passed away on September 8, 2021.

General Fleming was a graduate of the University of Illinois, Western Illinois University, and the U.S. Army War College. He honorably served his country in the Army National Guard from 1970 to 2005, obtaining the rank of brigadier general. He assumed duties as assistant adjutant general in September of 2001 and was responsible for the preparation and deployment of Illinois Army National Guard units in support of Operations Santa Fe and Enduring Freedom immediately following the September 11, 2001, terrorists' attacks, and the beginning stages of the National Guard's transition from a strategic reserve to an operational force.

General Fleming served as principal assistant to the adjutant general in all matters pertaining to supervision and management of the Illinois Department of Military Affairs and the Illi-

nois Army National Guard. Throughout his military career, he achieved many awards and decorations including: the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, and the Army Service Ribbon.

General Fleming also molded citizens as a teacher for Kewanee School and a principal and superintendent of schools for the Cuba School District and founding assistant commander of the Chicago Military Academy at Bronzeville. He leaves behind his wife of 53 years, Gayle, and their 2 children, daughter Nichole and son Robert. May his legacy of service and kind spirit serve as an inspiration to us all. ●

RECOGNIZING CLEAR CUT PHOCUS, LLC

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week, I recognize an outstanding Kentucky small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize Clear Cut Phocus, LLC of Louisville, KY, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

Growing up in Louisville, John Mittel dreamed of being a doctor. As a competitive swimmer, he developed an interest in health and fitness. John's passion for innovation and engineering led him to the University of Louisville, where he earned a bachelor of science in industrial engineering. John then enrolled at the University of Louisville School of Medicine to pursue his childhood dream. Like many students, John relied on coffee, energy drinks, and soda for a caffeine boost. One night, during a late-night study session, John thought, Why not just put caffeine in water? Over the next 2 years, he worked with his mentor, Tom O'Grady, to turn that idea into a business. They spent most of 2016 developing their brand and fine-tuning the Phocus formula, launching their product in 2017. After graduating from medical school in 2018, John deferred his residency in ophthalmology to continue building his company.

Today, Phocus is a thriving small business providing consumers nationwide a healthy alternative to the traditional energy drink. Headquartered in Louisville, Phocus recently celebrated its fourth anniversary. To date, Phocus has developed 11 flavors of sparkling and regular water infused with caffeine extracted from green tea, electrolytes, and the amino acid L-theanine. Unlike traditional energy drinks, Phocus beverages have zero calories and are free of sweeteners, sodium, and additives. Phocus beverages are available at several regional and national retailers and are featured in over 200 corporate offices across America. In 2020, Phocus Cola was named the Best New Product at BevNET's Best of 2020 Awards.

Like many small business owners, John and Tom are actively involved in

their community. Locally, Phocus regularly supports community organizations, including the Louisville City Football Club's youth soccer clinics and the American Junior Golf Association's Justin Thomas Junior Championship. During the holiday season, Phocus has teamed up with ESPN Louisville for its "Cram the Van" toy and clothing drive for children in need. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the company donated 200,000 cans of Phocus to 472 hospitals and healthcare facilities across 40 States. In May of 2021, their "Buy One. Gift One. A Case for Teachers." program donated cases of Phocus to teachers nationwide in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Month. Phocus's community involvement, success, and products have been profiled in local and national outlets, including WDRB, WAVE3, Louisville Courier-Journal, Louisville Business Journal, MarketWatch, Fox News, and CNBC.

Clear Cut Phocus, LLC is a remarkable example of the resilience and adaptability of locally owned small businesses. Small businesses, like Phocus, form the heart of towns across Kentucky and play a critical role in Kentucky's beverage industry. Congratulations to John, Tom, and the entire team at Phocus. I wish them the best of luck, and I look forward to watching their continued growth and success in Kentucky, and beyond.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Swann, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. DURBIN for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Rahul Gupta, of West Virginia, to be Director of National Drug Control Policy.

Elizabeth Prelogar, of Idaho, to be Solicitor General of the United States.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first